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FM USINT HAVANA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1806  
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY  
RUEHSW/AMEMBASSY BERN PRIORITY 0117  
RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN PRIORITY 0099  
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL PRIORITY  
RUCOGCA/COMNAVBASE GUANTANAMO BAY CU PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUESDM/JTLO MIAMI FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L HAVANA 000543

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/01/2017

TAGS: PREL PHUM SP FUN CU

SUBJECT: CUBA/SPAIN/EU: EMPTY GLASS APPEARS HALF FULL

REF: A. HAVANA 539

1B. PRAGUE 531  
1C. WARSAW 1217

Classified By: COM Michael E. Parmly; Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

11. (C) Czech Charge d'Affaires Vitor Korsetl told COM June 1st that Spain made some headway with the rest of the Europeans, based on Ambassador Carlos Alonzo Zaldivar's May 31 briefing to EU Chiefs of Mission regarding the May 29-30 Spain/Cuba Human Rights consultations. According to Korsetl, the Spanish ambassador made an effective presentation, arguing that the GOC would only respond favorably to respectful engagement. Korsetl also observed that he and his EU colleagues had been impressed by the argument that Cuba's internet failings were attributable to the U.S. embargo.

12. (C) Korsetl said he was the only one who pushed back at the May 31 briefing, saying that he didn't see any concrete results from the Spanish consultations and that the prison visit was like touring a Potemkin Village. The Portuguese Ambassador on May 29 told COM that he thought the Czechs were isolated, but Korsetl said he could count on support from the Dutch, as well as the Poles, Slovaks and Hungarians.

13. (C) COM repeated to Korsetl the point he made privately to Alonzo Zaldivar that it was a lie to blame Cuba's internet shortcomings on the U.S. embargo. "Canadian companies were installing satellite internet service all over Havana for foreigners, and could easily do so for Cubans if the GOC wanted this, but they don't," added COM. Korsetl took the point, and said he had confidence in the Czech MFA to hold the line in Europe, with a view toward the June 11 Political Directors meeting and the June 18 GAERC. The Spanish, he said, were aiming formally to lift the EU's June, 2003 measures, which make reference to Cuba's human rights problems as an impediment to fully normalized relations.

14. (C) Separately, dissident leader Martha Beatriz Roque (MBR) called Pol-Econ Counselor and said she was invited by the Spanish ambassador for a briefing but turned it down, offering instead that the ambassador visit her at her home. MBR said that Vladimiro Roca had agreed to hear the Spanish briefing on Monday, June 4. Roca on May 31 made a public statement to the effect that the Spanish visit was non-productive. Finally, MBR relayed a report from Elizardo Sanchez, who heard from political prisoner Omar Saludes, an inmate at one of the prisons where the Spanish visited. According to this sourcing chain, the "Toledo" prison in question is minimum security, and was clearly stage-managed for the visit.

15. (C) COMMENT AND ACTION REQUESTED: Cuban diplomacy has been relentless trying to divide and conquer the EU, and together with the Spanish they hit the EU in a weak spot by making the case for dialogue as an objective in and of itself. We will continue to push back in our meetings with Europeans, making the case that nothing about the totalitarian police state has changed to justify a softening of policy. We believe that strong -- and technical -- talking points on the internet issue would be helpful to us, and perhaps to the other missions.

PARMLY